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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5656
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0141
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3718
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7239
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0824
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3026
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0677
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000100

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: ICRC CHIEF OUTLINES FUTURE STRATEGY

REF: A. RANGOON 1743 06

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1794 06

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Frustrated by lack of progress with the regime, ICRC might issue public denunciations of repeated GOB violations of international humanitarian law and approaching third countries to enlist extra assistance. In response to the GOB's continued refusal to allow the ICRC access to conflict areas and prisoners, the ICRC may soon close two of its five field offices. The ICRC Head of Delegation believes the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Labor are misinforming the regime's top Generals regarding ICRC activities in Burma. Despite these obstacles, ICRC is determined to maintain its presence in Burma and to fight for unrestricted access to the regime's prisoners. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In a January 23 meeting with Charge d'Affaires, ICRC Head of Delegation Pierre-Andre Conod outlined the organization's future strategy in the face of the regime's refusal to allow ICRC access to conflict areas and resumption of its unaccompanied visits to detainees. Conod said that his meetings with the Minister of Home Affairs were devoid of any substantive discussion of ICRC's access issues. Rather, the Minister repeatedly lectures him on the regime's position. He saw no indication that a change of mind or heart on behalf of the regime's position toward ICRC will be forthcoming in the near future.

[1](#)3. (C) Conod said he will continue his ongoing dialogue with the Chief of Police and the head of the Prison Department, but neither have the power to alter the regime's decision to deny ICRC access. Conod has requested permission to proceed with field trips to Shan State and Kayin State on February 6 and February 12 respectively, and also hopes to meet again soon with the Minister of Home Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw. Without progress soon, Conod stressed, ICRC would close down its field offices in Kyengtung and Moulmein. ICRC's three remaining field offices in Taunggyi, Hpa-an, and Mandalay would remain open.

[1](#)4. (C) Conod also shared with us documents outlining ICRC policy, reviewing action they could take in the event of

"violations of international humanitarian law or other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence." For instance, Conod indicated that ICRC might share its concerns about GOB intransigence and violations of international humanitarian law in Burma with third countries, such as China, to encourage them to use their influence with Burma's ruling Generals to change their behavior. Conod would like these countries to emphasize ICRC's history of impartiality and confidentiality, which it has always honored in Burma. Other governments ICRC might approach about the GOB's violations are Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Germany, and the UK.

15. (C) The ICRC might also issue public denunciations of specific and repeated GOB violations of international humanitarian law, a measure the organization takes, Conod said, only when they have exhausted every other means. Conod reiterated that absolutely "no quality of dialogue" existed between ICRC and the regime, although ICRC's grave concern about humanitarian issues in Burma remains as valid as ever. The Charge noted the regime may think the vetoes of the Burma resolution in the UNSC were a victory, but that in their statements, all members of the UNSC emphasized the need for greater regime openness. The GOB's stance on ICRC shows its unwillingness to address the international community's concerns and a lack of respect for reputable international organizations such as the ILO and ICRC. The Charge pointed out that even the Chinese PermRep's statement expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Burma and should give no comfort to the regime.

16. (C) Conod believes Burma's top Generals are fed misinformation regarding the ICRC by the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Labor, both well-known

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hard-liners. He viewed the Director of Prisons as sympathetic to ICRC, but not having any voice in the policy. Conod told us that during Gambari's visit to Burma last November, the regime presented the U/SYG a GOB report disparaging the ICRC and its activities in Burma (Ref A). Gambari's office allowed the ICRC to view the report but has not provided them a copy. The Chief of Police recently told Conod that exile groups on the Thai/Burma border will use ICRC's information to prove there are political prisoners in Burma.

17. (C) Comment: The ICRC is clearly frustrated by its inability to make any progress with the regime on access issues. Nevertheless, Conod remains determined to maintain an ICRC presence in Burma and to fight for renewed access to Burma's prisoners. Many former political prisoners in the pro-democracy movement speak to us of the importance of ICRC visits during their incarceration. 88 Generation Student leader Ko Ko Gyi proudly carries his ICRC ball-point pen in the pocket of his white shirt. We receive regular reports that prisoners no longer receive the medications they need since the ICRC visits stopped, notwithstanding regime publicity of USDA (the regime's mass member organization) donations to the prisons. ICRC has been reluctant to criticize the regime publicly in the past, but realize they must step up pressure and push harder for support from other countries, particularly China, to exert pressure on the generals. End comment.

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